

Luke 17:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As He entered a village, ten lepers approached Him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” When He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then He said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection Questions

- 1) ***The Context:*** The cleansing of the ten lepers is unique to Luke's gospel. This healing appears towards the end of the gospel as Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem (i.e. His death). Luke intentionally highlights the 'Samaritan' as the one who bothers to come back and to give thanks as a foreshadowing of things to come. (see question # 6). This gospel story also mirrors a story from 2 Kings 5:1-19 where Naaman (another Gentile) is also healed of leprosy. There are some interesting parallels between the two stories. 1) Both Naaman and the Samaritan leper were Gentiles who asked a "Godly Jew" for healing. (they could recognize God's power and spirit in these Godly men.) 2) Both Naaman and the Samaritan as part of their healing were commanded to perform a seemingly irrelevant act before their healing took place (e.g. demonstration of humility and trust on their part). 3) Both Naaman and the Samaritan came back to praise God. 4) They both received a blessing upon their departure. These are interesting parallels because they say something about the universal nature of humankind's need for healing (whether rich or poor, marginalized or in the center of society), how we are to approach God with our needs, how we are to offer thanks not only for the restored health but offer thanks directly to the Source of that healing (our loving God).

- 2) As stated above, Jesus is on His way to His death to complete and to fulfill His mission here on earth and is accompanied by His disciples. Undoubtedly, Jesus knows that there are so many more things He would like His disciples to learn before He leaves them, so in some ways both the readers (and the disciples) are called to pay special attention to some of the final lessons Jesus would like to teach. In your reading of the gospels, which lessons stand out for you? Why?

- 3) "Keeping their distance". (vs.12b). The Torah instructs the community about how to deal with leprosy. Numbers 5:2-3 tells the community to put them out of the camp. Leviticus 13:45 requires every leper to shout out "Unclean! Unclean!" in order to warn others to keep their distance lest they become infected. Leviticus 13-14 instructs the community about how to deal with lepers in general; their quarantine, their inspection, the cleansing of infected houses and clothing. The lepers that Jesus came across, although they suffered

social isolation because of the laws of the Torah, they still respected the law and the community enough to maintain a safe distance as demonstrated by their keeping the distance required. (vs. 12b). When have you been ‘quarantined’/ marginalized by a community in some way, but still feel called to respectfully participate. How does this respect translate into grace when noticed by God? How are respect humility and grace related?

- 4) “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (vs. 13); the ten lepers cry out in unison. Leprosy in that era was not just considered a medical condition but was also considered an expression of God’s judgment on the individual (e.g. principle of divine retribution). These lepers have been humbled by their physical suffering, by their social marginalization and by the thought that they may have brought this suffering on themselves through their own sin (which was not true). Under all those layers of suffering and marginalization is a commonly shared desperate desire for healing and mercy. They cry out in **one voice** to the One they know can do something about their condition; they cry out to the Master (Greek: epitata—a person of great authority). They have probably heard of Jesus’ capacity to heal and now that He is in their midst they beg in one voice to receive healing. How do humility, desperation and faith work together when it comes to asking something from God? When have you been so humbled by a certain circumstance in life that your cry to God took on an emphatic tone that would not take ‘no’ for an answer? How can (does) God use such circumstances in our lives to invite us into a deeper faith? A bolder asking (where all pretensions are put aside)?
- 5) “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” (vs. 14b) Jesus commands them to do this before He offers them healing. They obey the command (no matter how illogical it might seem to them) by turning and walking towards a temple where they can find an Israelite priest. All of them obey the command (even though they are not yet healed....). The ten lepers’ demonstration of obedience, humility (willingness to follow a command that does not make sense just as Naaman did) and trust affords them the opportunity to receive healing. When in our lives, has God asked us to demonstrate our faith before we received what we were asking for? Jesus asks them to show the priests (the people who were assigned the role of assessing whether or

not a person could re-enter the community/ based on ritual cleanliness). How does God use this action to glorify Himself?

- 6) One of the lepers realizes that he has been healed (on the way) and turns back, 'praising God with a loud voice ...prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him' (vs. 15-16a). This man was a Samaritan. Luke clearly wanted to emphasize that point as he states it in a separate sentence. The one who is the model of faith (e.g. one who has the faith to receive the grace, and the humility and gratitude to give thanks for the healing and to directly thank the source of the healing)--the model for faith is an outsider/foreigner (in fact, someone whom the Israelites looked down upon, a Samaritan; a half-breed- half Jewish/ half Gentile). Jews would typically look down upon Samaritans because they had chosen to intermarry with pagans. But Jesus uses this person as a model for faith. Why? What do we have to learn from the marginalized among us? (both physically and socially?) In what way does our AIDS crisis mirror how lepers were treated? How can such a gospel story help us to better reach out to those suffering with AIDS?
- 7) Jesus does not fail to note that nine (90%) of the lepers did not bother to come back and thank Him for the miraculous healing. How common that is!?!—How true to our human nature at times. When have we been part of the 90% who do not give thanks? How did Jesus remind us that thanksgiving was necessary? In what way can we build into our spirituality into our attitudes a spirituality of gratitude? How can that change the way we approach our lives and each other?
- 8) At the same time, Jesus commends the one who did come back to give thanks and sends him on his way with a blessing; "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."(vs. 19) The phrase 'has made you well' can also be translated "has saved you". Ten were healed physically, but were all saved? Did all give praise to the Source of their healing? When have we experienced a connection between our faith, our healing and our closeness with God? The scripture tells us that he came back PRAISING and Thanking God. What is the difference between an expression of praise and one of thanksgiving? Why are both necessary here? How are both praise and thanksgiving intimately and inextricably connected to our healing/ wholeness/salvation in Christ?

Jesus is about to die, to be resurrected and to offer His Spirit and the gift of salvation to all of humanity. Luke wants the reader to know that some of the most humble and marginalized people will be the ones to recognize the great gift of Jesus in their midst.